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Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe ..... (Cameroon)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.5/72/L.24)

1. **The Chair** invited the Committee to consider the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work for the first part of the resumed seventy-second session, prepared on the basis of the note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation (A/C.5/72/L.24).

2. At the main part of the current session, the Committee had decided to postpone its consideration of the proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (see draft decision A/C.5/72/L.23, adopted as General Assembly decision 72/547 on questions deferred for future consideration). However, in the light of the time pressure faced by the Committee and the variety of views expressed in connection with that restructuring, he suggested that the Committee should consider the Secretary-General's update report (A/72/720) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/72/7/Add.45) at the current part of the resumed session.

3. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee must soon decide on institutional changes to make the United Nations more efficient, effective and fit for purpose. The Group looked forward to considering the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) with a view to making best use of the Unit's audits and reviews and addressing the low rate of implementation of its recommendations by some organizations. In considering the reports on standards of accommodation for air travel, the Committee should discuss improvements in Secretariat travel management. The benefits of the implementation of Umoja in travel administration must be realized through comprehensive data analysis, which would enhance accountability and help the Committee identify bottlenecks. The construction of the new facility for the International Residual Mechanism in Arusha, Tanzania, was necessary for the fulfilment of the Mechanism's mandate. The Group welcomed the conclusion in December 2016 of the construction phase and the beginning of the post-occupancy/defects liability period. The Secretariat must closely monitor progress and ensure that the remaining rectifications were fully completed without further delay within the revised time frames and approved resources, and a final progress report must be submitted to the General Assembly.

4. The Group looked forward to the timely issuance of reports of the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee in all languages, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Despite recent progress in addressing the chronic problem of late issuance of documents, further improvement was needed. Documents must be issued in a timely manner to facilitate the Committee's deliberations and ensure that important subjects received the attention they deserved. The work of the Committee and the Advisory Committee must be managed in line with those Committees' established practices; in particular, priority must be given to time-sensitive and budget-related issues.

5. **Mr. Burity** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Committee would complete its work within the allotted time of approximately two weeks if delegations bore in mind the intergovernmental nature of the Organization and respected the principles of inclusiveness, openness and transparency. The programme of work must be balanced, and he urged the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee and the Bureau to work together to ensure that reports, including the Secretary-General's report on the reform of the peace and security pillar, were issued by the end of March 2018. Since a conducive working environment was essential to improving staff productivity and welfare, the Group welcomed the completion of the construction of the new facility for the Arusha branch of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, and would request further information regarding the implementation of the defects liability phase. Given that the General Assembly at the main part of the current session had approved a commitment authority in the amount of $87.8 million for the maintenance of the International Residual Mechanism pending the submission of a revised budget proposal for the biennium 2018–2019, the Group requested that the Committee should consider the budget of the Mechanism at the second part of the current resumed session. Further deferral of consideration could bring the operations of the Mechanism to a standstill. The Group welcomed the Secretary General's efforts to improve travel management and looked forward to participating in the negotiations on standards of accommodation for air travel. It attached great importance to effective oversight of the Organization's management and operations, and looked forward to participating in the negotiations on the report and work programme of JIU.

6. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the Committee's programme of work should be approved sufficiently in advance, particularly because the time allotted for the

current part of the session was short and because the Community attached great importance to discussion of particular issues, including the utilization of the contingency fund, standards of accommodation for air travel and the financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. Member States had proved at recent sessions that even the most complex matters could be resolved in a timely manner, provided that the political will existed.

7. **Mr. De Preter** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the States members of the European Union welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals for making the Organization more efficient and reactive. The Committee should be pragmatic and consider reports as soon as they were issued, to optimize its use of time and resources and ensure that all the matters before it received due consideration. The States members of the European Union were concerned about the growing politicization of the programme of work. Each of the Secretary-General's proposals should be examined without distinction as to content and without regard to political considerations, and the programme of work must not privilege the political priorities of some members over those of others. The timely issuance of documents in all languages was essential to the transparency of the Committee's debates and the avoidance of disruption in the Committee's work. His delegation was concerned about the management of the time allotted to the Committee, which should take decisions in normal working hours and had a collective responsibility to work optimally.

8. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea** (Mexico) recalled the importance of the significant decisions taken by the Committee at the main part of the current session, including the adoption of the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019; the approval of the resources required for special political missions, including the new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; the approval of resources for peacekeeping operations, including the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH); and the adoption of a draft resolution supporting the Secretary-General's management reform proposals, approving the change from a biennial to an annual budget period and requesting the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report to the General Assembly at the second part of the current resumed session.

9. His delegation also saw great significance in the issues before the Committee at the first part of the current resumed session, and hoped that the programme of work, and a constructive approach from the members of the Committee, would facilitate progress towards an effective, efficient, transparent, accountable and rational Organization, in which resources were well used. His delegation would carefully analyse the reports on standards of accommodation for air travel and make every effort to reach consensus on arrangements to make the ticket-purchase procedures more agile, to maximize the use of information and communications technologies, and to make savings. He welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendations related to the review of the Organization's policy on travel entitlements and the elimination of first-class travel. In line with Member State policies of austerity, budgetary responsibility and accountability to taxpayers, first-class travel should be available only to the Secretary-General and his spouse.

10. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal for the regional restructuring of OHCHR, since the redeployment of staff from the headquarters to the regional offices of OHCHR would bring the Office closer to the field and help it respond to the increasing demands of Member States in the field of human rights. In addition, the proposal was cost-neutral, and his delegation particularly advocated the establishment of a regional office for North America and the Caribbean in Bridgetown. In discussing the reports on the utilization of the contingency fund, JIU and the construction of a new facility for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals in Arusha, his delegation would be guided by the principles of rational expenditure, proper use of resources, accountability and transparency; it remained committed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization and to agility in recruitment, the deployment and development of field staff, and emergency response. Institutional coordination, inter-agency collaboration, results-based management, transparency and accountability should be enhanced. The Secretary-General should respect those principles in the development of proposals.

11. **Ms. Norman-Chalet** (United States of America) said that the Committee had an opportunity to advance the reform of the Organization through its decisions on standards of accommodation for air travel and the restructuring of OHCHR. Informed decisions on air travel by Member States would encourage the culture change needed to transform the United Nations. Her delegation thanked the Secretary-General for his personal leadership in the area, including his decision to limit the number of staff with whom he travelled. The

travel policies of many Member States, including the United States, reflected modern travel alternatives and budgetary realities. In deciding on the matter, the Committee should help the United Nations focus resources to best support mandate fulfilment. While relatively few matters were before the Committee at the current part of the resumed session, the second part of the resumed session would be an opportunity for the Committee to ensure the success of the essential reforms to which Member States were committed.

12. **Mr. Fu** Daopeng (China) said that, while the matters before the Committee at the current part of the resumed session were relatively few, their importance was substantial. With regard to standards of accommodation for air travel, the Secretariat must strengthen travel management to strictly control expenses and utilize funds efficiently. Although his Government doubted the procedural legitimacy of the Secretariat's submitting a new report on the proposed regional restructuring of OHCHR, it was willing to be flexible in order to facilitate the Committee's work, and therefore agreed to the matter being considered at the current part of the resumed session. Other parties should also show flexibility and a spirit of compromise.

13. His delegation appreciated the work of JIU but was concerned about the low rate of implementation of the Unit's recommendations. JIU should adapt to the requirements of United Nations reform and strengthen cooperation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Board of Auditors to reinforce internal control. The Secretariat should address the remaining issues affecting the new facility for the International Residual Mechanism in Arusha as soon as possible and within the approved budget to establish favourable conditions for the work of the Mechanism. Financial resources were the foundation of the governance of the United Nations, and a sound financial situation was the basis for the fulfilment of the Organization's responsibilities and roles and the material guarantee for reform. In February 2018, China had shown its support for the United Nations and the Secretary-General by paying in full its assessed contribution to the regular budget. It called on Member States with the ability to do so to pay their contributions on time, in full and without conditions, in accordance with the Charter, and to turn their commitment to the Organization into practical action.

14. **Ms. Frolova** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation could see no objective reason for the Committee to consider immediately the Secretary-General's report on the update on the proposed regional restructuring of OHCHR; the decision on the matter was not urgent and could be easily postponed until the seventy-third session of the General Assembly without budgetary consequences. However, many delegations had been insistent that the document should be considered at the current part of the resumed seventy-second session, and the Chair had concurred. Her delegation was ready to continue the discussion, but remained adamant that any future decisions on the restructuring of OHCHR must be taken by consensus, to avoid setting an unwelcome precedent with far-reaching negative consequences. Her delegation was meanwhile concerned about the deferral of the introduction to the Committee of the Secretary-General's report on the establishment of a system of accountability in the Secretariat from the current part of the resumed session to the second part. Although the programme of work for the second part was overloaded, the Committee should closely analyse and take a decision on the matter.

15. With regard to the other matters included in the programme of work, her delegation trusted that an additional appropriation for the biennium 2018–2019 would be approved promptly, in response to the statement on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution on the high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis (A/72/L.40, adopted as General Assembly resolution 72/268). Her delegation would continue to advocate modernization of the working methods of JIU and the improvement of the practical results of its reports and recommendations for United Nations system organizations. Discussion of standards of accommodation for air travel should continue, taking into account the Secretary-General's recent report on the matter.

16. **Mr. Imada** (Japan) said that his delegation regarded the decision to shorten the first part of the resumed session as an example of good practice in the working methods of the Committee, whose credibility depended on keeping to the established schedule and allowing sufficient time for the Secretariat to process documentation. The matters before the Committee were essential to the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations, which must rationalize its use of travel resources in view of changes in the airline industry and the rapid development of communications technology, and must show the world that it could make the necessary changes in its working culture. Member States were responsible for achieving concrete results as the first step towards broader reforms.

17. **Mr. Oussihamou** (Morocco) said that his delegation fully supported the inclusion of the proposed regional restructuring of OHCHR among the matters before the Committee at the current part of the resumed session.

18. **Mr. Varankov** (Belarus) said that the Committee's consideration of the proposed regional restructuring of OHCHR should be deferred to a subsequent session of the General Assembly to allow time for the Secretariat to address the related issues and for the appointment of the next United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose opinions should be taken into account. The Committee should consider the proposed restructuring after discussing the other matters before it at the current resumed session.

19. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed programme of work on the understanding that it would be adjusted as necessary to make best use of available time as the first part of the resumed session progressed.

20. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 142: Joint Inspection Unit (A/72/34, A/72/704, A/72/704/Add.1 and A/72/733)

21. **Mr. Flores Callejas** (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of JIU for 2017 and programme of work for 2018 (A/72/34), said that in 2017 JIU had completed seven system-wide reviews and two management and administration reviews of individual organizations, one note and one management letter. That mix of products reflected the Unit's mandate to draw on a system-wide perspective while supporting individual bodies, and its commitment to strengthening the framework for integrity and accountability, contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and improving efficiency and coordination in the United Nations system. In consultation with the organizations concerned, the review of the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction strategies in the work of United Nations system organizations, which had been included in the report of JIU for 2016 and programme of work for 2017 (A/71/34), had been deferred until 2018. In its place, JIU had initiated reviews of internship programmes and whistle-blower policies and practices.

22. In 2018 JIU would complete four projects started in 2017 and would launch nine new initiatives. In addition, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/237, which had been adopted after the issuance of the report, JIU would submit a progress report on its recommendations to the United Nations development system on implementing measures to further strengthen the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. With respect to implementation of its programme of work, JIU had entered 2018 on a stronger footing than previous years. The long-vacant position of Executive Secretary had been filled. The opening of two senior vacancies had provided an opportunity for the new Executive Secretary to update the descriptions of duties in line with current needs. In addition, Germany and the United States of America had each agreed to provide a Junior Professional Officer. In order to ensure their financial sustainability, the web-based tracking system and the JIU website had been migrated to platforms managed by the Secretariat, and the design and functionality of the website had been enhanced.

23. The impact and added value of JIU depended on its findings being considered and its recommendations being implemented. According to the Unit's report on the outcome of the review of the follow-up to JIU reports and recommendations by the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2017/5), between 69 and 83 per cent of JIU recommendations had been accepted, with higher rates for single-organization reports and recommendations addressed to executive heads. The procedures of legislative bodies for considering JIU reports varied, and in the report the Unit identified good practices that should be commonly applied. The legislative bodies, including the General Assembly, considered and implemented JIU recommendations less uniformly than was envisaged in the statute of JIU.

24. The practice in the Committee of considering JIU reports in the context of related agenda items had the unintended effect of constraining the General Assembly's ability to take advantage of the Member States' substantial investments in the work of JIU and to consider and act on those reports. For instance, at the main part of the current session, the Committee had considered the Unit's reports on donor-led assessments and knowledge management under the items related to OIOS and human resources management, respectively. The specificities of human resources management had prevented serious consideration of the institutional knowledge management issues raised by the Unit, and the scope of the report on donor-led assessments had included matters going beyond internal oversight. The solution was for all JIU reports, or at least those that did not clearly fall under other agenda items, to be considered under the item related to JIU. That would ensure that the Unit's findings informed decision-making and allow the General Assembly and the other legislative bodies to provide feedback to JIU, enabling it to issue recommendations that were better attuned to legislative requirements.

25. Introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the outcome of the review of the follow-up to the JIU reports and recommendations by the United Nations system organizations (A/72/704), he said that the JIU report on the matter (JIU/REP/2017/5) presented the

results of the second phase of the review of the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations, included in the programme of work of the Unit for 2015. The system-wide review, conducted over a two-year period, had included all JIU participating organizations and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The follow-up was based on the principle, established by the Assembly in its resolution 50/233, that the impact of the Unit on the cost-effectiveness of activities within the United Nations system was a shared responsibility of the Member States, JIU and the secretariats of the participating organizations.

26. The report set out two recommendations addressed to the General Assembly and other legislative bodies, and five to be acted upon by the executive heads. They were intended to enhance the effectiveness of the follow-up system, transparency and accountability, cooperation and coordination in the implementation of JIU recommendations, and the dissemination of best practices. The review concluded that the Unit's follow-up process was hampered by the fact that some legislative bodies had reacted inadequately to JIU reports and recommendations. Furthermore, systems for verifying, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations should be improved.

27. What was termed a "maturity matrix" had been designed, in order to show the development of the follow-up process at the participating organizations, based on factors such as their rates of acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations, their processes for considering, taking decisions on, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the recommendations, the effectiveness of their focal point function, their use of the web-based tracking system, and the existence of follow-up agreements with JIU. Appropriate follow-up of JIU recommendations was essential, and recommendation 3 of the report was intended to improve the process for considering and taking decisions on JIU reports and recommendations. The endorsement of the report's recommendations would help the Unit achieve its objectives of enhancing organizational efficiency and effectiveness and strengthening system-wide coordination.

28. **Ms. Petrova** (Director, United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the report of JIU for 2017 (A/72/733), said that, in accordance with the statute of JIU, the Secretary-General, through the secretariat of CEB, performed functions that supported the Unit's work, mainly in connection with the preparation of reports that concerned more than one organization. Throughout 2017, the secretariats of CEB and JIU had worked together to ensure the timely preparation of notes by the Secretary-General containing responses to reports addressing system-wide concerns. They had engaged in dialogue to ensure a smooth report preparation process as JIU maintained its focus on system-wide issues. JIU had also held consultations with the Information and Communication Technology Network at the Network's twenty-eighth session.

29. The Secretary-General, in consultation with members of CEB and in accordance with the statute of JIU, had reviewed the qualifications of inspectors proposed to fill a vacancy that had occurred in 2017. He had also consulted members of CEB regarding the appointment of the Executive Secretary of JIU. The Secretary-General was committed to maintaining a close working relationship with JIU and encouraged all organizations to respond in a timely manner to its requests.

30. Introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the review of the follow-up to the JIU recommendations by the United Nations system organizations (A/72/704/Add.1), she said that those organizations supported the general findings and best practices identified in the JIU report on the outcome of the review (JIU/REP/2017/5). However, they emphasized the distinction between the role and authority of executive heads and the role and authority of legislative bodies, particularly with regard to agenda-setting and documentation for those bodies. JIU should clarify the process and criteria that it used in addressing its recommendations to legislative bodies and to executive heads. Recommendations requiring decisions by legislative bodies on management issues did not reflect the distinctions between those two types of audience.

31. While the organizations welcomed the maturity matrix as a concrete basis for engagement regarding performance in JIU matters, they observed that decisions by legislative bodies not to consider the Unit's recommendations, or those bodies' inability to include the recommendations in their meeting agendas, had a negative impact on acceptance and implementation rates. In future reporting of such statistics, the analysis should be adjusted accordingly. Questions had been raised about the process for addressing recommendations included in management letters, which fell outside the categories of reports, notes and confidential letters as defined in the statute of JIU.

32. Regarding recommendations 1 and 2, the organizations emphasized the distinct roles, responsibilities and levels of authority of the executive

heads, and legislative bodies and their bureaux, particularly in deciding on the course of action to be taken and the final text of decisions. While efforts should be made to ensure the timely consideration of JIU reports, in the case of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, the current practice of bundling those reports together with relevant reports of the Secretary-General was practical and convenient. Although the organizations generally supported recommendation 5, they observed that current processes were designed to verify responses in a cost-effective manner, and requested clarification of the costs and benefits of further verification through an additional, independent channel.

33. **Mr. Ahmed** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group commended the contribution of JIU to Member States' efforts to enhance the Organization's efficiency, functioning and ability to fulfil its mandate. The Group attached great importance to realizing maximum benefits and efficiencies from the auditing and review activities of JIU, OIOS and the Board of Auditors. It would seek further information on efforts to enhance coordination among those bodies, particularly with regard to their programmes of work, and to reduce overlap. The filling of the position of Executive Secretary and two senior posts should help JIU discharge its mandate. The Group was pleased that the number of women inspectors and of female staff in the Professional category in the Unit's secretariat had risen, bringing JIU close to attaining gender parity.

34. The nine reports, the note and the management letter issued in 2017 all contained specific, actionable recommendations. The review of management and administration in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (JIU/REP/2017/1) had highlighted the decline in regular budget resources and the rise in earmarked voluntary contributions. The Committee should examine those trends, which were frequently encountered at other entities and had risk implications for governance, financial sustainability and management functions. The Group looked forward to examining the review of the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations with a view to increasing the Unit's efficiency and system-wide impact. It would seek further information on the reasons for the low rates of acceptance and implementation and ways in which those rates could be increased.

35. The Group welcomed the diversity of the projects envisaged for 2018 and the focus on such issues as organizational and managerial change. The capacity of the United Nations to manage change must be enhanced, in the light of the proposed reform and restructuring of the Secretariat and the need to reposition the United Nations development system in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group commended the progress made with regard to the web-based tracking system and the migration of the system and the JIU website to platforms managed by the Secretariat.

36. **Ms. Norman-Chalet** (United States of America) said that, as the sole independent external oversight body mandated to conduct system-wide evaluations, inspections and investigations, JIU was uniquely positioned to provide Member States with critical views of programme effectiveness and administrative policies in such areas as air travel, which affected the whole United Nations system. JIU also had an essential role to play in the implementation of the Secretary-General's reforms by ensuring that the Organization incorporated lessons learned from previous reforms. Her delegation looked forward to considering the reports to be issued in 2018, including the review of oversight committees and the review of whistle-blower policies and practices. Policies and processes that protected staff members against retaliation for reporting misconduct should be improved.

37. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of JIU to improve its working methods, including through the introduction of the web-based tracking system, which would strengthen organizational accountability. She called on organizations and governing bodies to endorse JIU recommendations and report on their implementation, and urged JIU to continue collaborating with CEB, the executive heads of organizations and Member States.

The meeting rose at 12 p.m.